

## March 16, 2005: NORTON INTRODUCES BILL FOR TRANSFER OF WEAPON FUNDS TO DOMESTIC NEEDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2005

### NORTON INTRODUCES BILL FOR TRANSFER OF WEAPON FUNDS TO DOMESTIC NEEDS Criticizes Bush for Decreasing Funding for Nuclear Threat Reduction

Washington, DC — Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) reintroduced the Nuclear Disarmament and Economic Conversion Act of 2005 (NDECA) today as Japan and the United States mark the 60th anniversary of the devastation of Japanese cities by an atomic bomb by the United States to end World War II. NDECA would require the United States to disable and dismantle its nuclear weapons when all other nations possessing nuclear weapons enact laws to do the same. NDECA further provides that when our nuclear weapons are dismantled, the resources used to support nuclear weapons programs would be diverted to our growing human and infrastructure needs, such as housing, health care, Social Security and the environment.

Norton has introduced this bill every year following a ballot initiative in the District in 1993.

The Congresswoman said: "In addition to the economic cost of nuclear weapons, the weapons have increased as a destabilizing force in world affairs." Norton, a member of the Homeland Security Committee, said that the threat was greatest today from inadequately defended nuclear materials throughout the world. She criticized the Bush administration for reducing nuclear threat spending since 9/11. Norton said that with 45 million people still without health care, Social Security without the benefits for the huge baby boomer generation, an economy burdened with a dangerous deficit, and millions of Americans pushed back into poverty, the time has come to begin transferring funding for nuclear weapons to urgent domestic needs.

Norton's full introductory statement follows:

Mr. Speaker, today, I am again introducing the Nuclear Disarmament and Economic Conversion Act (NDECA), as I have done since 1994. I have introduced this bill every year based on a ballot initiative passed by D.C. residents in 1993. NDECA will require the United States to disable and dismantle its nuclear weapons when all other nations possessing nuclear weapons enact laws to do the same. NDECA further provides that when U.S. nuclear weapons are dismantled, the resources used to support nuclear weapon programs would be diverted to our growing human and infrastructure needs, such as housing, health care, Social Security and the environment.

This year's introduction of this bill has special meaning because this is the sixtieth anniversary of the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Only the United States has used an atom bomb, but today the number of nations with this capability has grown dangerously and continues without effective intervention by the Bush administration.

In addition to the economic cost of nuclear weapons, the weapons have increased as a destabilizing force in world affairs. North Korea, at least in part in response to stepped up aggressive talk and U.S. policies, has responded in a dangerously paranoid fashion by announcing that it is expanding its nuclear capabilities and even that it now has a nuclear weapon, although these claims have not been entirely verified. Iran also appears to be pursuing greater nuclear capability and is resisting inspections. India and Pakistan have moved back from the precipice of several years ago but each remains poised with nuclear weapons.

This country must lead the world community in redoubling efforts to push back the new surge of nuclear proliferation. Our country would be better able to dissuade other nations who aspire to become or remain nuclear powers if we ourselves took greater initiative in dismantling our own nuclear weapons program. We moved in the right direction when the Senate ratified the Moscow Treaty in 2003, which provides that by 2012 both the United States and Russia will reduce their long-range warheads two-thirds from approximately 6,000 warheads each to 2,200. However, the Administration has failed to build on this effort. According to a recent study, "Securing The Bomb: An Agenda for Action" (May, 2004; prepared by the Belfer Center, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government): "Total nuclear-threat-reduction spending remains less than one quarter of one percent of the U.S. Clinton administration request, made long before the 9/11 attacks ever occurred."

However, the problem today is far more complicated than nuclear disarmament by nation states. The greatest threat today is from inadequately defended and guarded sites in many countries where there is enough material to make nuclear weapons and many opportunities for terrorists to secure nuclear materials. Astonishingly, because of the absence of presidential leadership, less nuclear material was seized in the two years following the 9/11 attacks than in the two years immediately preceding the attacks ("Securing The Bomb: An Agenda for Action", May 2004).

I serve on the Prevention of Nuclear and Biological Attack Subcommittee of the Homeland Security Committee. I know that threats from nuclear proliferation and available nuclear material are more dangerous in the post 9/11 era than at any time since I first introduced this bill in 1994. The way to begin is closing down nuclear capability here and around the world.

With 45 million people still without health insurance, Social Security without the benefits for the huge baby boomer generation, an economy burdened with a dangerous deficit, and millions of Americans pushed back into poverty during the last four years, the time has come to begin the transfer of nuclear weapons funds to urgent domestic needs. military budget. Indeed, on average, the Bush administration requests for nuclear-threat-reduction spending over FY 2002 &ndash; 2005 have been less, in real terms, than the last